

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 264 641

EA 018 045

AUTHOR Burlingame, Martin
TITLE Images of Leadership in Effective Schools Literature.
PUB DATE Apr 85
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, IL, March 31-April 4, 1985).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; Cultural Context; Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Leadership; *Leadership Styles; Literature Reviews; Principals; Research Problems; School Effectiveness; *Theory Practice Relationship

ABSTRACT

The literature of the effective schools movement argues for three very different images of what constitutes leadership, which are regarded in this paper as confused images of leadership. The first image is of a supremely pragmatic but rational actor, the second is of a leader who adheres to the norms typical of the local community culture, and the third is of a leader dependent on group consensus. The research supporting the first image appears based on unchallenged preconceptions and misinterpretations. The case studies used as evidence for the second image fail to reveal universal leadership qualities underlying local standards of leadership. The third image places great significance on the teacher's role, and thus runs counter to prevailing effective schools theory and is therefore generally dismissed. In addition to overemphasizing the principal's leadership role, many of the research reviews pertaining to effective schools are plagued by two other serious errors: generalizing too hastily from too few cases, and ignoring the contexts in which the research projects occurred. The inadequacy of effective schools research allows universal models of leadership to be prescribed that cannot be followed by principals in individual, context-bound practice. (PGD)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

FD 264641

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official NIE
position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Martin
Burlingame

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

IMAGES OF LEADERSHIP IN EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS
LITERATURE

Martin Burlingame

School of Education Administration and Research

The University of Tulsa

April, 1985

Prepared for the 1985 American Educational Research
Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, March 31-April 4, 1985.

EA 018 045

Images of Leadership in Effective Schools Literature

Like the tidal storms that frequently sweep the rugged and beautiful coast of Oregon each winter, the effective schools movement developed slowly, unleashed its fury on the shoreline, and, I now sense, is waning. The moral fervor of its advocates will soon be turned on those teachers and administrators who failed to achieve or who opposed effective schools. For the advocates of effective schools, educators will be found lacking in moral fiber and intellectual talent. Advocates who seek to improve schools seem already on the prowl for the next slogan that promises instant remediation.

Much should be learned from the impending failure of the effective schools movement. The failure itself could be chronicled. What factors in the environment promoted or hindered effective schools? Or, effective schools could be compared to other fads. In what ways could we parallel effective schools and management by objectives, for example? Or, effective schools might be examined as a political strategy. What groups in our society saw effective schools as providing them advantages and what groups saw effective schools as producing disadvantages. Today I wish to look at one small lesson.

There is something important to be learned from the abiding, but misplaced, faith the effective schools literature has in the importance of administrative leadership. A close reading of reviews and a few case studies suggests that the literature argues for three very different images of what constitutes leadership. These contrasting images of administrative leadership are often hidden by differences in research style and by writers who are hasty in finding generalizations. These images deserve close analysis; their clarification is the first task of this paper. Moreover, these confused images of leadership either create or further illuminate important problems about leadership in schools. The second task will be examining two of those problems.

Three Images of Leadership

Overview

Let me briefly describe the three images of leadership that have often been indiscriminately embraced by the effective schools movement. Before I chronicle these images, I must warn you that I shall argue that there is a sharp split between images of leadership found in the general reviews of literature, most quantitative studies, and some of the qualitative case studies.

The first image is most frequently found in general reviews of the literature. Leadership One sees the leader as the supremely pragmatic, but rational actor; followers accept intellectual persuasion. In contrast, the second image of leadership is

most frequently found in the qualitative case studies of effective schools. Leadership Two sees the leader as acting in a manner that represents the typical leader of that culture; followers accept the leader who adheres to their cultural norms about what leaders do. The third image, Leadership Three, sees the leader as waiting for group consensus to emerge; this image is found in a few qualitative case studies. Until consensus is reached, the leader cannot act; followers decide what the leader may propose and do as leader.

Leadership One

As described in the growing cottage industry of reviews of effective schools literature,¹ Leadership One stresses that leaders combine two talents. First, leaders have the intellectual abilities to ascertain appropriate goals for schools, to review possible alternatives, to weigh consequences, and to select appropriate solutions. However, if a particular solution does not work, leaders are wise enough to complete another rational cycle and to propose another option. Leadership is top-down; leaders define goals and provide strategies. For example, one reviewer of the effective schools literature writes: "The goals of change are strongly focused and clearly defined, but multiple strategies are encouraged..." (Mackenzie, 1983, p. 11).

The most frequent goal for teachers and the school is raising test scores. The goals for leaders stressed by the

effectiveness literature are, first, the need to provide a stable, orderly school environment and, second, the ability to raise the expectations that teachers hold for their students. For many, these ends seem ordinary and trivial in light of the extraordinary emphasis placed on administrators. Why did those who sought to find leadership in effective schools work so hard to convince us that the means the thoughtful, pragmatic leader would use, would be directed towards the goals of stability and enhanced expectations?

There are several reasons for this concern. First, the reviewers began with conceptions of what constituted a good school. These preconceptions admitted of only one causal pattern: from school environment to teachers to pupil achievement. Second, they began with preconceptions of what constituted a good leader. These preconceptions admitted only one causal pattern: from principal to teacher. Using these preconceptions as their guides, they turned to a series of studies hoping to confirm their preconceptions. These studies often created an artificial parallelism between findings about effective classroom teachers and effective school principals. This parallelism is the product of implicit preconceptions; these data will not support the overly simplistic argument that the behavior of principals necessitates certain reactions on the part of teachers and students.

Most reviewers have misinterpreted much in these studies; most of these studies do not provide an overwhelming body of information that support preconceptions about administrative leadership. For instance, there are significant problems with most of the quantitative studies (Rowan, Bossert, and Dwyer, 1983; Rowan, 1984). Moreover, a number of the qualitative case studies provide mixed information on the virtues of administrative leadership or stability and raised expectations (Lightfoot, 1983). Further, the urban bias of much of the quantitative literature that supported stability and expectations makes these findings appear place specific. Hence, preconceptions have greatly shaped these reviews (Rowan, 1984). There is one other universal argument that needs brief exploration. Some have suggested that principals may not have an empirical set of universal tools but they do belong to a normative community based upon acceptance of certain educational ideals and theories. Principals know what ought to be done; they work diligently to achieve these universal ideals. Unfortunately, my reading of the quantitative review literature finds this variable neither discussed nor operationalized.

Leadership Two

If we turn to Leadership Two we find in some of the qualitative case studies an image of leaders who are considered to be the best representations of the norms of leadership in their

immediate communities.² In contrast to rational and pragmatic leaders, cultural leaders use metaphors of leadership of particular communities. For instance, in a rural southern community the school leader fulfills the role of mammy, in a suburban northeastern city the leader is a business executive, in a southwestern rural community the leader will be a trail boss, or in an inner city school the leader is a bad dude.

There can be two different views of what it means to fulfill community norms of leadership. On the one hand, leaders may be fulfilling some universal leadership role with a local accent. A successful local school leader represents universal traits or styles found in any community. Much of the review literature on effective schools acts "as if" leaders embody universal traits or styles. A close reading of some of the case studies, however, suggests a very different view: few such universal traits or styles exist. The case studies suggest that leaders are constrained to play roles in particular ways by the particular community. Leadership is retained as long as the individual continues to demonstrate traits or styles in ways that are familiar in that community. Our rural southern mammy would not do well in a suburban northeastern city, just as our business executive would flounder in a rural southern community.

Even if the styles may be influenced by the local community, aren't the contents of schooling--curriculum, teaching

methods, resources and benefits--similar across communities? Again, the reviews of effective schools argue that there is some universal outcome measured by standardized tests. However, a perusal of the case studies reveals that not only do the styles of these culture-bound leaders differ, so does the content of schooling. The mammy sees the role of curriculum, teaching methods, resources, and benefits in a way that maintains certain cultural roles for various social groups. She does this with great devotion to children, using love and selflessness. The trail boss may urge students to hitch up their wagons--and laces ("paddles") them if need be--to become good students so they can become good members of their agricultural community. The principal as executive runs the school so that all see the need to be competitive members of the corporate team--each leader accentuates not only a different cultural style and content for the school, but also sees key actors such as parents, teachers and students in different ways. The reproduction of each of these cultural communities, in sum, inhibits any universalistic statements about either administrative leadership or the content of schooling.

Leadership Three

Leadership Three confounds the issue further. A few case studies see the leader as effective only if a consensus has been created by the group. A critical mass of the faculty leads; the

administrator does their bidding. This image of leadership, one favored by many politicians and by those who like to talk of bottom-up leadership, receives scant attention in studies of effective schools. The literature reviews generally seem disturbed by these few studies; typically reviewers suggest that "There is a good deal of uncertainty about the role of informal leadership within the school" (Mackenzie, p. 11).

If leaders do what followers wish, if teachers literally create administrative leaders, then the teacher is viewed as a vital force for improvement. Teachers, in fact, take on some of the characteristics of principals found in most literature reviews. Much as our first type of leader, teachers are the fount of wisdom and inspiration; only a few need to be brought up to speed. Principals appear useful as facilitators and resource generators. In terms of stability, principals are expected to back the teachers, as they create a positive school climate. Principals also support teacher expectations about students. Moreover, a few of the case studies see the principal as leader is an "equal partner" in the creation of a good school.

There are few studies in the published research that carefully detail Leadership Three. The emphasis on the principal as the leader has often led to teachers being ignored. In nearly all reviews and in most case studies in the effective schools litera-

ture, teachers are nonentities. But the ignoring of teachers is not the only serious error of the literature reviews.

Some Errors

The bias toward the principal as the important figure in school change and improvement, while a serious error, was not created by researchers and writers in the effective schools movement. It has been around at least since the scientific management writings in the early 1900s. The work of Taylor and his followers stressed the role of the planner and several foremen in designing work, training workers, and enforcing standard practices. The critique of that tradition by Raymond Callahan (1962) deserves careful reading by many who write reviews of effective schools literature.

What was less evident in early works, and what may characterize much of the summaries of research on effective schools, were two serious errors: the fallacies of hasty generalizations—too few cases to bear the weight of the generalization--and of ignoring the context. The fallacy of hasty generalization is a perennial problem in educational research. The problems of the fallacy of ignoring the context deserves further attention.

A close reading of many of these case studies provides evidence that a strong link exists among cultural characteristics of communities, contents of schooling, and leadership styles of

the school administrators, most particularly principals.³ Principals do not adhere to some universal rules about leading or about contents of schooling but instead behave as leaders in ways that are familiar to the norms of leadership and followership in particular communities. Our principal as trail boss would do well in a southwestern community, but would be a drugstore cowboy in a northeastern suburb. The fit among expected ways of leadership, expected content of schooling, and behaviors of the principals as leaders must be good.

Let me expand the argument using some of the notions of Durkheim. He writes that "where solidarity derives solely from resemblances, whoever does not deviate too much from the collective type is, without opposition, incorporated into the aggregate" (1933, p. 151). By stressing cultural images that enhance resemblances, leaders may lead through incorporation. Yet we must be careful. Durkheim comments: "Chiefs...can produce new things and even, in certain measure, deny collective usages" (p. 195). The qualitative case studies may provide ways of exploring the extent to which collective usages may be denied; the literature reviews deal with neither collective usages nor their denial.

The larger generalizations created by reviews of the effective schools research, and the image of Leadership One, are mistaken. They are mistaken because by ignoring the context

they miss all the tacit meanings that come with what it means to provide stability and order or to raise the expectations of students in a particular community. These administrative purposes are just not the same thing in Community A as they are in Community B. To act as if the fulfillment and the content of these generalizations are universal is to make the same mistake as believing that the term "junior high" describes the same institution in Community C that it does in Community D. The cultural matrices that bind school and community give very different meanings to terms such as order or expectations. To argue that there is some universal, invariable meaning that all subscribe to is to commit the fallacy of ignoring the context.

The point can be made in another way. As purposes or goals, providing stability and raising expectations are "open". (MacIntyre, 1973). They are "open" because they are ideals that can never be completely realized (Kerr, 1976). We can always think of some other way to improve the stability in the school situation; we can always conceive of increasing the expectations of students by some degree. The shapes of stability and expectation that are accepted at a particular moment are set by the cultural context. The context provides some "practical closure" (Care, 1973) which not only defines what stability and expectation mean but also sets the level of stability and expectation to be found in particular schools. The effective

schools literature is an attempt to induce some communities to accept different practical closures of these purposes. The context cannot be ignored; to do so is to commit an important fallacy.

By ignoring the context the reviewers have both enshrined Leadership One and created a caricature of school leaders. Leadership Two, and the culturally embedded leaders of most schools have been ignored. The decision to ignore Leadership Two is not a mere slight; it is a major and dangerous omission.

We need to review with some care the case studies of effective schools with an eye for the details of leadership in various cultural settings, to see these studies in such a way that we preserve what Merton called middle-range theories,⁴ and to seek generalizations that move us from Leadership Two to Leadership One point Seven or Leadership One point Nine at most. This scrutiny may well produce tentative findings that are less obvious and more insightful than the universal generalizations produced by many who have created literature reviews which argue for effective schools.

Consequences

Confusion reigns supreme in discussions of leadership in effective schools. For example, the growing discussions over top-down versus bottom-up is only the tip of the iceberg in these

confused discussions about leadership. I would like to elaborate on a couple of significant consequences of this confusion.

One consequence of this confusion should be labeled organizational schizophrenia. The confusion over the images of leadership have placed school administrators in the classic double bind. On the one hand, the reviews of the literature tell administrators they must lead, saturating them with claims that what they do is important. They are told how truly successful administrators do their work using some universal kit including all-purpose diagnostic and prescriptive tools. On the other hand, the moment administrators, such as principals, start to follow some universal prescription within a particular school and community, somebody objects. The cultural constraints of the situation are immediately invoked to limit what a particular principal can do. In some situations, students want creativity and freedom in doing assignments; in other settings, teachers want classrooms that are their exclusive province; in some communities, parents want high test scores but little homework; some communities resist raising taxes to pay for school improvements.

Principals seek some psychological refuge from the clash of the universal and the particular. Embedded in the life of a particular community, the school's daily life provides few reinforcements and many adverse reactions to the universal image of leadership suggested by the literature reviews of effective

schools. If administrators try to lead without reflecting the cultural images of leadership, they disturb the resemblances of that community. The generalized conceptions of leadership must be translated into the everyday imagery of that community. If this transformation does not take place, the principal is simply rebuffed. The solution of rebuffed administrators is simple: they develop a style that suggests the principals are really doing something when in fact nothing is happening.⁵

Principals become organizationally pathologic: they talk one way and act another. Principals talk as if they consciously wish to use the general findings of effective schools reviews to improve their schools; they talk as if they were universal leaders. Because they fail to see the importance of capitalizing on the specific cultural images of their community, because they are taught to believe that the universal is best, because they are quickly disappointed--all lead principals to act on the basis of learned timidity. The administrator becomes the classic con artist, the flim-flam man promising everything and then ducking around the corner.

The vast majority of school administrators are organizational schizophrenics; they deserve help because we who do the research and who claim to train them have helped create that condition. But we cannot help administrators until we realize that many do not trust us when we say we have come to help.

These administrators have been snakebitten many times; researchers have been most generous as we have offered universal help about how to lead. But none of these generalized and global remedies have helped; principals are increasingly immune to our patent medicines. If researchers are going to help, we must do it by some other means than one shot, drop-in consultancies. We must spend enough time with principals to see their world as they see it—rich, complex, and conflict ridden. We must come to understand the cultural milieu in which they operate and the images of leadership provided by the milieu. We must realize that what principals say and what they do are disjointed. With these in hand, researchers may begin to generate middle range theories, not our sweeping generalizations.

When researchers come to that point, our work may well begin to help principals understand what it means to create effective schools.

What is less clear, and of equal importance, is that there is serious confusion over the nature of followership. Each image of leadership entails an image of followership. The leader, as presented by the general reviews, requires docile followers who are impressed by calculation, rationality, goals, and the leader. The leader who uses cultural imagery depends upon followers who know, practice, and believe in the present cultural pattern. The leader as follower depends upon followers who work to achieve

consensus. The nature of following is an important, if now implicit, element in our discussion of leadership; the review literature spends almost no time on this topic.

Those who follow must be just as confused by the reviews of effective schools literature as those who lead. Once again the cure is obvious and time consuming. We must, if we are to be helpful, come to understand what following means in a school in its cultural context. Such understanding requires that we spend a good deal of time working with the site. It also requires that we come to understand the various types of followership that may exist in a particular site, we compare followership in multiple sites, and we remain sensitive to the specific cultural images of followership that exist in particular locales. That kind of behavior, that kind of time commitment seem the only ways of understanding leadership, followership, and effective schools.

Summary

In sum, we must look with great care at the reviews of literature which claim to find universals for administrative leadership. The case studies suggest that the cultural context surrounding most schools makes leadership and followership heavily depend upon unique cultural images. Moreover, a few case studies find leaders dependent upon followers. We must avoid sweeping generalizations.

Dealing at a very low level of abstraction means that we need to conceive of studies about administrators and to train practicing administrators in ways that accentuate, not hide, important contextual differences. We must understand the reasons for and the consequences of following, to use Durkheim's word, "collective usages." We must also come to understand leaders and followers who deny, in some measure, "collective usages."

With such humble beginnings, we may begin to explore what leadership does in making schools effective or ineffective. We may also slow down, if not completely halt, the tides of reform that sweep education. Unlike the coast of Oregon, our tidal storms of educational reform do not seem to always produce a starkly beautiful landscape. In fact, the flotsam and jetsam of most educational reforms look more like the pollution of Chicago River than the beauty of Boiler Bay.

Footnotes

1. Depending on your criteria, there are at least 15 reviews of literature on effective schools. A good example is Mackenzie, 1983.

2. The best example is Lightfoot, 1983; although critical of the effective schools argument, other good studies are found or cited in Lieberman and Miller, 1984.

3. The literature has little to say about the role of other administrators, such as the superintendent or central office bureaucracy.

4. I am taking a different line about the worth of case studies of effective schools than Deal, 1984, or Rowan, 1984.

5. The same point is made in Wolcott, 1984, p. 321-322.

References

Raymond E. Callahan, EDUCATION AND THE CULT OF EFFICIENCY. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Norman S. Care, "On Fixing Social Concepts," ETHICS, 84 1973, pp. 10-21.

Terrence E. Deal, "Searching for the Wizard: The Quest for Excellence in Education," ISSUES IN EDUCATION, 2 1984, pp. 56-67.

Emile Durkheim, THE DIVISION OF LABOR IN SOCIETY. Translated by George Simpson, Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1933.

Donna H. Kerr, EDUCATIONAL POLICY. New York: David McKay Company, 1976.

Ann Lieberman and Lynn Miller, TEACHERS, THEIR WORLD, THEIR WORK. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 1984.

Sara Lightfoot, THE GOOD HIGH SCHOOL. New York: Basic Books, 1983.

Alasdair MacIntyre, "The Essential Contestability of some Social Concepts," *ETHICS*, 84 1973, pp. 1-9.

Donald E. Mackenzie, "Research on School Improvement: An Appraisal of Some Recent Trends," *EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER*, 12, 1983, pp. 5-17.

Brian Rowan, Steven Bossert, and David Dwyer, "Research on Effective Schools: A Cautionary Note," *EDUCATIONAL RESEARCHER*, 12, 1983, pp. 24-31.

Brian Rowan, "Shamanistic Rituals in Effective Schools," *ISSUES IN EDUCATION*, 2, 1984, pp. 76-87.

Harry F. Wolcott, *THE MAN IN THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973.